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ABSTRACT

Increasing speed alone will not insure reading success, the author stated. It is important that students have the necessary reading and study skills and that they also develop good habits in both. The author mentioned the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) and the OK4R Formula. He also introduced a new study formula, I, PW, R, R, designed through the use of the S.O.S. Reading Study Kit. Steps in this formula are Isolate, Preview-Write, Read, and Reinforce. Suggested uses for the S.O.S. kit are given. References are included. (NH)

Louis A. Oliastro

Study Skills at the College Level

Basic readers! Reading laboratories! Speed reading! Rapid reading! Words per minute! Faster, faster, faster! Is this the answer to textbook reading in our high schools and colleges today? Advertisements in today's mass media would indicate that reading success is assured through speed alone. However, Walter Pauk states,

> . . . evidence is clear, at least for Cornell students, that programs designed around speed reading, rapid reading, or developmental reading help students little in academic subjects. Actually, when we think about teaching college students to read faster, we may rightly ask, "Why should the more rapid movement of a student's eyes enable him to scoop up the facts and ideas presented in a textbook?" It is far more logical to suppose that a course designed to teach students the skills of textbook reading, notetaking, close reading of literature, etc., would more nearly meet the academic needs of students.[1]

With the advent of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1966 and a billion dollars poured into public school programs, the inexperienced layman might assume that many of the academic problems facing the college freshman might be eliminated. Furthermore, with much of the funds directed toward reading programs, expensive laboratory facilities, mobile classrooms, machines, devices, kits and a multitude of new materials, the feasibility of reading instruction at the college level might be questioned.

Also, compared to the tremendous budgets fostered by federal funds, the college reading budget seems meager indeed. How

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will the college service compete with secondary school programs that offer many kinds of materials designed to teach just one of the reading skills? Where will the college find materials that have not already found their way into a secondary reading lab? Furthermore, what happens to the student who has already been subjected to secondary reading programs and still needs help at the college level? Already these students are finding their way into the mainstream of college life.

Ruth Strickland states, "The language skills are not subjects and cannot be, even though there are some understandings to be developed and some knowledge of operating procedures to be learned in connection with each of them. One cannot read (reading) nor write (writing), when one talks, reads, or writes. He must talk, read, or write about something. There must be some content, whether it be trivial or profound; whether it deals with language itself or with social studies, literature, arithmetic, art, music, or items of personal or community interest."[2] A close inspection of the multitude of materials available reveals a huge bulk of narrative type materials. Even though the reading skills are well organized and attractive in narrative materials, the actual practice material is narrative in form and far from the work type reading required in the content areas. As pointed out by Nila B. Smith, the academic success of a child depends on his ability to cover subject matter rapidly and with understanding, nad he must be able to recall the subject matter when he needs it for examinations, reports, or discussions.[3] The dilemma

facing many students is that success can be achieved in the reading lab with multi-level materials. But, only frustration results when confronted with the content material as faced by the single textbook concept adopted by many of the high schools and colleges. Even at the elementary level, Austin and Morrison[4] reported that contrary to the majority of the questionnaire and interview responses, other than for the development of technical vocabulary (rarely were common words with specialized meanings given consideration), there was only limited evidence that reading skills were being taught in the content areas.

As early as 1945 a survey conducted by Traxler[5] indicated that high schools and colleges in a questionnaire concerning reading programs, recognized the great importance of providing for the reading needs of all students. However, only about one school in four had actually developed a definite school-wide program in reading. Furthermore, only one school in ten was carrying forward such a program with the full co-operation of the staff. It is quite evident then as now that recognition of reading problems exists but the implementation seems to be toward teaching reading in isolation rather than involvement of the total staff, especially content teachers.

It would appear that the problem facing the college freshman who needs reading and study helps is two-fold. In the first place he is interested in improving his reading level, but on the other hand he must acquire efficient study techniques with his content textbooks to succeed in school. If the reading and study skills course offered is on a voluntary basis, it is not likely he will enroll. His rationalization

is that time spent in practicing in the reading lab with the materials presented could be better utilized in study time. It would seem that the student himself feels that the transfer of the skills learned in a reading course will not be in time to save him from probation or the finality of dropping out. With this in mind the following is a description of the reading-study skills course offered by the Reading Center at California State College, California, Pa., and the introduction of a new study formula - I,PW,R,R.

One of the uses of psycnology of particular interest to college students is the improvement of methods of study. Psychologists have done considerable research on this problem and have discovered ways in which almost every student can make some improvements either in the time required for study or in the mastery of the material. According to Morgan and King, probably the two most important things that a student can do to improve his college work are to develop strong motivation for study and a well-organized routine.[6] Many students who would like to do well in college cannot muster the fortitude to study. They cannot really concentrate on the job. As for a study routine many students do not have certain times and places for study, and do not apportion their time well among their various subjects. Students should make up definite schedules for study, based on the difficulty and amount of work to be expected in each course, and then follow it reasonably well.

Several formulas or rules have been formulated to help students organize their studies. Perhaps the best known of these is the S.Q.3R.

method. This grew out of an elaborate program at the Ohio State University by Francis Robinson[7] in 1946 to analyze and treat students' academic problems. It consists of five specific steps which are labeled survey, question, read, recite, and review. Another excellent formula was devised by Walter Pauk[8] - The O.K. 4 R Formula. Pauk has added reflect to the S.Q. 3 R. Formula.

The I, PW, R,R, Formula designed by Herron, Kennedy and Oliastro[9] at California State College through the use of the S.O.S. Reading Study Kit was initiated to make study formulas more practical. It is the intent of this kit to bring the reader's skills directly in contact with the material to be studied in the textbook. The instructor is able to observe study behavior with a tangible device. This makes diagnosis of problems in study habits feasible.

The make-up of the kit and the use of the I, PW, R, R Formulas are as follows:

(1) The I in the formula stands for isolate.

An isolation folder is provided in the kit to isolate sections of the textbook that have been assigned or need to be studied. The isolation folder is made of cardboard with a slot cut in the middle to allow textbook pages to be placed through the cardboard. When this is done the assigned pages will be isolated from the rest of the text. As mentioned before much of a student's scholastic success depends upon motivation and successful completion of tasks. The purpose of isolation of the material is to limit the task to only the assigned pages to provide motivation for completion of the task seems smaller

by literally making a small book out of a larger one. The isolation folder placed on a textbook not only calls attention to the assigned task but also the use of the rest of the formula.

(2) The PW stands for Preview-Write.

The S.O.S. Kit provides a preview-write pad. This pad provides a structure to help students visualize the main ideas and sub-points of the assignment. For example, the headings on one side of the pad designed for social studies and general education courses provide an area for title and sub-title questions. Two other areas are set aside for new vocabulary and names, places, and dates. During this stage of the formula, the students preview the assigned material using skimming and scanning techniques to locate and jot down the information under the appropriate heading on the structured PW pad. This step is used to help students build background and to plan purposeful reading, a vital step to efficient reading.

(3) The R stands for Read.

The reading step is the fulfillment of the purposes set by the student, author, and teacher. A student must be actively involved during the reading process so the purposes set can be clearly defined. Textbook reading is difficult; a student must not only interact with difficult material but also recall the information at a later date.

(4) The R stands for Reinforce.

The S.O.S. Kit provides an excellent method to reinforce the retention of textbook material. The headings noted on the PW pad can be used as references for later recall on questions and important details as

they are related to chapter meanings. Immediately after a section is read, these same Preview-Write headings (vocabulary, symbols, questions, formulas, principles, etc.) can be used as the basis for self-recitation to check whether the answers are known. Periodic review with the Preview-Write sheets will assist the retention of textbook material.

The S.O.S. Kit can be helpful to a reading teacher in the form of an informal diagnostic tool. Observation of a student going through the steps of the Reading-Study Formula can be very revealing concerning overall reading efficiency. If a student is having difficulty locating titles, subtitles, or the supporting details, the reading teacher may spend some time helping the student with skimming and scanning techniques. In fact, scanning with easy materials such as newspapers, magazines, or paperbacks to learn the techniques would be advisable during the first few assignments. The PW pad also affords the teacher the opportunity to teach main ideas and details for those students having difficulty. A student having difficulty with vocabulary skills such as context clues or word structure could be helped immediately with material that will be also functional by locating the reader's weakness on the PW sheet. Grouping students is also possible with the S.O.S. Kit in a reading classroom. The students could be grouped according to their interests, weaknesses, or strengths in the content areas. Individualization could be achieved by observing the amounts and types of material written under the headings of the PW pad. This information is also a cue for areas to be emphasized by a content teacher.

Speed of reading, of course, is important, but study skills will give the immediate help necessary for academic success.

Footnotes

1 Walter Pauk, "Scholarly Skills or Gadgets," The Journal of Reading, (March, 1965) p. 239.

2 Ruth C. Strickland, The Language Arts in the Elementary School (Boston, 1957) p. 157.

3 Nila B. Smith, Be A Better Reader - Book VI (New Jersey, 1961) p. 51.

4 Mary C. Austin and Coleman Morrison, The First R. (New York, 1963) p. 50.

5 Arthur E. Traxler, "Provision For Reading Instruction in Secondary Schools and Colleges Holding Membership in the Educational Records Bureau," Educational Records Bulletin, NO. 43, 1945, p. 59.

6 Clifford T. Morgan and Richard A. King, Introduction to Psychology (McGraw-Hill, 1966) pp. 146-148.

7 Francis Robinson, Effective Study (New York, 1961) p. 28.

8 Walter Pauk, How To Study In College (New York, 1962) p. 41.

9 Frances J. Herron, Gary W. Kennedy, Louis A. Oliastro, SOS Reading-Study Kit (SOS Press, 1969).